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ABSTRACT

A report on second language instruction in elementary schools outlines the state of the art and makes policy and program and offers recommendations. An introductory section discusses the rationale for foreign language instruction at all levels and particularly in elementary schools, emphasizing the value of early and prolonged exposure to language study. A second section examines program format choices: immersion, FLES (foreign language in elementary school), and FLEX (foreign language exploration). A third section discusses language choices, and presents the cases for French, Spanish, and German; for Japanese, Korean, and Chinese; and for Latin. Other considerations in establishing a program are addressed, such as the following: whether the program will be integrated into the curriculum or provided as an add-on curriculum element; articulation with high school programs and commitment to followin through at the secondary level; appropriate approaches and materials; and teacher qualifications. Recommendations are made to the Alaska State Department of Education, school administrators, and the University of Alaska concerning information dissemination, needs assessment, policy formation, program administration and coordination, and curriculum development. Attached is a selected bibliography of 15 items and the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Provisional Proficiency Guidelines. (MS)

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AFLA | ALASKA FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A SUMMARY REPORT

FOR THE

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Submitted By

WOLF HOLLERBACH, PRESIDENT

Fairbanks, April 1985

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Preface

This summary report feeds on a number of sources: the discussions, February 3, 1985, of a special AFLA task force which grew out of a subcommittee of the Foreign Language Curriculum Committee of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District; the enlightening presentation given on the subject by Dr. John L.D. Clark, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, at the 1985 AFLA Annual Conference, February 1 and 2, in Fairbanks; the excellent introductory publication by the Center for Applied Linguistics: Foreign Language in the Elementary School. A Practical Guide, by Nancy C. Rhodes and Audrey R. Schreibstein; professional publications on foreign language pedagogy that have influenced, over the years, my thinking; and of course my own experiences, observations and philosophy gathered and developed in many years of teaching.

A first draft of this report was read by **Doug Bruce**, next year's AFLA president, and **Leslie Gordon**, chair of both the Fairbanks subcommittee and of the AFLA task force. I thank these two colleagues for helpful suggestions, **John Clark** for guiding our discussions, the task force members for their continuing commitment: **Tam Agosti-Gisler, Barbara Hecker, Janice Gullickson, Pat Spence, Flory Vinson, Sarah Hok, Shirl Kaltenbach, Tim Volwiler** and all those who, on a Sunday morning on a cold winter day, came out to the University of Alaska campus in Fairbanks in order to explore choices, arguments, and ideas that could help schools around the state improve learning opportunities in foreign languages. Last but not least, I thank **Darby Anderson, Mike Travis, Bob Silverman,** and **Annie Calkins** of the Alaska Department of Education, for the support they have given this special AFLA project, and **Commissioner Harold Raynolds, Jr.** for the strong leadership in the development of all academic programs, including foreign languages.

1. Introduction

Why should one learn foreign languages at all? There is obviously not one single answer to the question, but rather a whole bundle of answers. Some reasons are highly individual, for example: to be able to speak with my grandparents. Some are very pragmatic: because I want to be admitted to the college of my choice; or because I want to become an interpreter, a teacher, a diplomat, or an expert in foreign trade, or a social worker. Some, equally pragmatic, concern the well-being of society as a whole: because the country needs many individuals knowledgeable in other languages and cultures to help us survive in the interdependent world of tomorrow. Some are more broadly defined educational goals: because it helps bring about a deeper awareness and appreciation not only of other languages and cultures but, by contrast and comparison, of one's own language and culture. Some relate to the dynamics of learning and to scholastic achievement in general: because it trains the mind, enhances cognitive flexibility, prepares one for dealing with the unknown and unexpected, etc.

However the question that really concerns us here is rather: why should one begin to learn foreign languages <u>in elementary school</u>? There are essentially two main answers. One concerns the quality of learning; the other, the length of time available for learning the foreign language.

Learning another language in childhood is not necessarily faster than at a later age, as is sometimes claimed; but it seems to come easier and perhaps with more certain results. The distinction between "learning," and "acquisition" (Krashen) may help explain this phenomenon. "Learning" refers to conscious processes of defining and applying rules and structures; "acquisition" refers to unconscious, automatic handling of language units. It would seem that children 'acquire" the foreign language largely without going through conscious rule learning. Their way of dealing with the foreign language resembles more closely the way they acquired their first language. If there is a "natural way" to develop a foreign language proficiency in an academic setting, it surely must be at an early age. The time before puberty is considered particularly important for the acquisition of an authentic, accent-free pronunciation.

Gaining true proficiency in a foreign language requires a great deal of practice and exposure for long periods of time. The popular expression "to pick up a language" is utterly misleading in that it suggests a casual and short-term process. An earlier start of language instruction permits longer sequences which in turn enable the student to attain higher levels of proficiency. The quality of the foreign language experience is linked to its length in the sense that "acquisition" demands more time than "learning". An adult aided by his analytical thinking capacity, can, in

a relatively short time, get to know much about a language without knowing that language. On the other hand, a child who does not feel the need to reason and to analyze, and who approaches the world in a more "total way" may get to know the foreign language without or long before knowing much about it. A word of caution is in order: experience shows that children acquire a communicative facility in a foreign language rather easily. But they also lose it rather easily unless there is exposure, practice and actual use over extended periods of time. Furthermore there are indications that the loss is all the more extensive the earlier it begins. In other words, a child at ten years of age, who ceases to be exposed to and to use the foreign language seems to lose it more quickly and more totally than the eighteen-year old who had attained approximately the same level of proficiency.

Some people object to the introduction of foreign language programs at an early age arguing that learning a subject as complex and difficult as a second language tends to confuse the children, slow them down and have an adverse effect on their scholastic achievements, in particular in English. Indeed, early research data seem to confirm this position. Later investigations however tend to contradict it. One answer to this puzzling conflict of data may lie in the distinction between "subtractive" and "additive" conditions of bilingual learning (Lambert-Peal). "Subtractive

conditions" prevail when a minority child's first language is gradually replaced by the second, culturally dominant language, whereas under "additive conditions" a child adds another language to the first, culturally secure one. Under the "subtractive conditions", the impact of the dominating second language may well be negative. Under the "additive conditions", on the other hand, the impact seems generally to be positive: the child gains in flexibility of thinking and cognitive growth, which in turn result frequently in higher scholastic achievements in all subjects. The important point is that the typical foreign language program operates under the "additive", or beneficial, conditions.

Another important consideration, which links the impact of the second language learning to its length, refers to the "threshold" concept (Cummins). There may be two such "thresholds" of language knowledge: "If a student attains a lower threshold level of bilingual competence, that would be sufficient to avoid any negative cognitive effects, but it seems that a second, higher level of bilingual competence is necessary to produce accelerated cognitive development" (Ginsburg-McCoy, 1981, p. 38). More research is needed to link these "thresholds" to clearly definable levels of proficiency, for example on the widely accepted ACTFL scale. But the general implication of the threshold concept is, in one word: more is better.

In the sixties, foreign language programs were introduced in many elementary schools across the nation. With some notable exceptions, most failed and vanished. Some principal reasons for the failure were: the lack of qualified teachers, inadequate teaching materials, short-term programming which did not allow enough time to develop acceptable levels of proficiency, the lack of "articulation" or coordination with foreign language programs at the junior and senior high school levels, and, perhaps in a more general vein, a less than adequate understanding of what is involved when a child learns another language. Even today, much more needs to be known about this complex question. But it would seem that we are better equipped today and that foreign languages in elementary schools can be the success they ought to be, and bring our students the benefits they deserve. In fact successful programs are in operation in schools throughout the nation and may serve as models and sources of inspiration to schools in our state. A partial listing can be found in Rhodes-Schreibstein.

2. **Format Choices**

In the U.S. today, three general formats for foreign language instruction in elementary schools can be distinguished. Each of them represents a range of possibilities rather than a discreet point on a scale. Together they cover the entire spectrum between, on one side, totally committed immersion and, on the other, enrichment and exploration.

2.1 The Immersion Format

The fundamental principle of immersion is, one might say, "jump in and swim". The foreign language is used as a vehicle for teaching academic subjects; it is not the object of study as such. The children "acquire" the language and through it some of the culture without formally "learning" it, just as they "acquired" their mother tongue, English, earlier, as babies and toddlers, without receiving classes in it. The teacher, who is trained both in elementary education and in the foreign language, will of course work with the children on the language but in a way that resembles the corrections given the young child by parents or other adults. Immersion programs are usually (but not necessarily) introduced in Kindergarten and carried through the entire elementary school period.

In <u>total immersion</u>, all subjects are taught in the target language. As the children attain fluency and communicative proficiency, English is gradually introduced as a language of teaching and learning (normally by grade 2 or 3) until it is used about half of the time or somewhat less. The first subject taught in English is ordinarily English (Language Arts) itself. In combination with out-of-school use of English and the often observed greater awareness brought about by the foreign language experience, this arrangement prepares the children well for high school, including in English. " Immersion programs place functional fluency and

mastery of subject matter as their dual objective" (Rhodes-Schreibstein, 1983, p. 6).

In partial immersion, the "jump-in-and-swim" principle is applied only part of the time, in some subjects. Also there is no reason why partial immersion could not be introduced later, for instance in Grade 2. Depending then on the two variables - the extent of use of the target language and the time of its introduction - the degree of fluency attainable under the partial immersion format can vary considerably.

2.2 The FLES Format

In terms of basic philosophy and approach, FLES (Foreign Languages in Elementary School) differs essentially from Immersion in that the foreign language and culture is here the object of formal study in and of itself and is not used to teach other subjects. Contrary to Immersion which relies, as a matter of principle, solely on "acquisition", the FLES format relies on both "learning" and "acquisition" even though, in practice, the importance of rule explanation, analysis, etc. will vary greatly with the age of the students. It should be understood, too, that in many FLES programs the target language is taught successfully through the exclusive or near-exclusive use of the language itself ("direct method"), a fact that tends to dilute somewhat the conceptual distinction between FLES and Immersion. Some FLES programs are quite intensive (for

instance 45 minutes five times a week), in which case the proficiency attainable may come close to that of certain partial immersion programs. Others are much less intensive (for instance 30 minutes 2 times a week).

2.3 The FLEX Format

The FLEX (Foreign Language Exploration) is the most limited of the three basic formats. It does not aim at developing any proficiency in foreign languages; it does not teach the language (as both immersion and FLES do). Instead it teaches about the language and the culture. In that sense a school with a French FLEX program, for example, does not have a language program. The difference is crucial. If it is not clearly understood, support for the program may rapidly vanish when students and parents find out that the children can in fact not speak or understand French: a FLEX program should not be expected to produce any degree of proficiency. Its objectives are rather to familiarize the children with the notion that there are different languages and cultures, what some of the differences are, what it is like to tackle another language, and other such things. The range of commitment is considerable: some FLEX classes meet one time per week for 30 minutes; others, two or three times; some devote only a few weeks or a semester to a given language, others maybe a year; some programs expose the students to only one language, others to several. The crucial points are that the objectives are clear, that the

program is worked into the broader framework of the humanities and social studies, and that it is, in its own way, solid and even demanding, a worthwhile enterprise of which the students, later, will not say: "It was just a loss of time!"

3. Language Choices

The choice of format is the most crucial one because it implies fundamental objectives, curriculum changes and resource commitment. A second choice concerns the language or languages to be taught.

3.1 A Case for French, Spanish, German

Several main reasons come to mind in favor of choosing one or more of the living European languages that have traditionally been taught in the American school system. One pragmatic reason is the relatively easier availability of qualified teachers and adequate instructional materials. Another pragmatic reason concerns the usefulness of these languages. French is still, next to English, the second most useful language for getting around in the world. Spanish is the language not only of at least 200 million speakers in countries that have close geographic, economic and political ties with the U.S., but also of 12 to 15 million American citizens or residents whose number is growing rather dramatically across the nation, including in Alaska. German finally is spoken by about 100 million speakers in three important European countries, is a

valuable second language to have in many Eastern European countries, and still enjoys a solid reputation as a language of science and technology, music, philosophy, literature. A cultural-historic argument in favor of these European languages brings forth the many contributions to our mainstream culture made by the countries where they are spoken: these languages and cultures are an integral part of our identity. Another convincing argument relates to the language learning process as such. French, German, Spanish are closely related to English in vocabulary, morphology and syntax. Since they are relatively easier to learn, for speakers of English, than unrelated languages, they are excellent tools of apprenticeship; the student can learn techniques of foreign language learning before tackling more difficult ones.

3.2 A case for Japanese, Korean, Chinese

There would seem to be two main reasons in favor of introducing these East-Asian Languages in Alaskan elementary schools. One is their future practical usefulness in the context of Alaska's growing economic ties with countries of the Northern Pacific Rim and the scarcity of Americans with a good working knowledge in them and a real understanding of the corresponding cultures. The other argument concerns again the language learning process, but makes the opposite point: precisely <u>because</u> these languages are so much more difficult to learn, they should be introduced as early as

possible so that the serious student has much more time available to learn one of them really well.

The arguments against introducing Japanese, Korean or Chinese in elementary school should also be considered: very little experience, nation-wide; total absence or relative scarcity of good instructional materials; considerable difficulty in finding qualified instructors; and, due to the stringent demands on the students, an attrition rate that will often be much higher than for the European language programs. This means in practice that the school district will frequently have to suspend its enrollment guidelines in order to be able to assure the continuity, over several years, without which the chief "learning argument" loses its value.

3.3 A Case for Latin

In general the arguments in favor of living languages in elemementary school are overwhelming. However a case could also be made for a one-year Latin course, in the FLEX or FLES format only, as a support for Engish and/or as a preparation for a regular secondary program in French and Spanish (or German, for that matter since German shares with Latin a rather fully developed system of declension and conjugation).

4. **Other Choices**

In addition to the primary choices with regard to format and language, other choices need to be considered to establish a

foreign language program in the elementary school. One concerns the relationship between the language classes and the rest of the curriculum, and the other the question whether the language instruction should be required, or not. The two choices are obviously closely interrelated and will therefore be treated together.

The first basic question is: should the language program be inserted as an integral part of the curriculum or should it be offered as an add-on? The immersion format implies of course full integration because the foreign language does not in itself constitute a separate subject matter. It also implies that the language be required. The insertion versus add-on question concerns thus only the FLES and the FLEX format.

If the insertion option is chosen, room must be made in the curriculum for the foreign language instruction. In the face of an already overflowing elementary curriculum, objections can be anticipated from administrators as well as teachers, and perhaps some parents. The question poses a real dilemma unless one is ready to concede the positive effects of foreign language learning on other subject matters (English and social studies) and the child's cognitive development in general. The result is often better scholastic progress and improved achievements overall. There is a growing body of evidence that seems to support the fundamental validity of these feedback claims.

A number of school districts with integrated FLES or FLEX programs of various intensity are obviously able to justify their decision on those grounds. Moreover, nothing short of a well-rounded curriculum reflects adequately the crucial importance, for the future of our country and indeed our planet, of an education for the world. Our schools must educate our children for global awareness, understanding of other cultures and tolerance as well as for practical international communication and survival in an increasingly competitive world market. Also it would seem that only a holistic curriculum does justice to the basic tenet that underlies our educational philosophy, namely that "school" is more than training in a variety of skills, that education involves the person as a whole.

Under the insertion option, the language classes are scheduled during the regular school day, but are not necessarily required of all students. Tracking would still be possible so that languages would compete with other subjects such as shop, or art, or music. Most analysts however seem to agree that all students can benefit from the language experience (with the weaker ones proportionately benefitting perhaps even more than the stronger ones!) and that, if a school makes the commitment to incorporate foreign languages into the curriculum, it might as well go all the way.

The arguments in favor of fully integrated and required language classes are strong. Objections, anxiety and doubt

may be met, on the district level, by declaring a school or certain schools as Foreign Language Magnet Schools or Foreign Language Academies where registration is voluntary and independent of school boundaries. The experiences of other school districts in the country suggest that, after an initial period, waiting lists for these schools may be necessary. "A national survey conducted by the University of Michigan in 1979 showed that. . . 75% [of those polled] thought [foreign languages] should be taught in the elementary school" (Benevento, 1985, p. 9).

The add-on option, on the other hand, also has its defenders and has been adopted by many schools in the U.S. One suspects that the decisions in those cases were based mostly on considerations of organization, or the mechanics of administration and funding rather than on considerations of educational value, philosophy, and objectives. The add-on option provides for an extra class either before the regular school day, or after. It is virtually never mandatory. Often the decision in favor of the add-on option also implies that the language class be financially self-sustaining. This means in practice that the school district makes the facilities available, but that instruction is either voluntary or paid for by parental contribution. While being, in an administrative perspective, a very expedient solution, this particular arrangement raises serious objections: on the one hand there is no guarantee of program continuity and sound curricular planning, and no

control of the quality of instruction; on the other hand there is an elitist selection based in many cases on the economic resources of the parents rather than on the educational merits of the program or the children's or society's needs. And: this option runs the risk of sending the wrong signal, namely that global education is a frill that need not be taken too seriously. It runs the risk of perpetuating what has been called "America's scandalous incompetence", and of reinforcing rather than checking the wide-spread perception that school itself is a less than serious affair. Learning can, and should whenever possible, be fun, but fun taken seriously nevertheless.

5. Some Points of Crucial Importance

5.1 Articulation with High School Programs

If an immersion or a serious FLES program is adopted, it must be carefully coordinated with language instruction at the higher levels of schooling. It makes no sense to lead the young students to some level of mastery and then not offer them the opportunity to consolidate and improve their valuable skills and knowledge. Before the learner can, and in fact does, read with ease and confidence in the target language, interruption of the school program or placement substantially below the proficiency level attained means retrogression and eventually more or less total loss. The lack of articulation between levels is one of the major tragedies of many foreign language programs across the

country. It is experienced each year by thousands of foreign language students. It is not as if Americans could not learn other languages. It is our system that makes it so difficult.

What does articulation mean in practical terms? It means that the school may have to offer, depending on the intensity of the elementary program, a Level II French class in 7th grade, or a Level V or possibly even a Level VI Spanish class in high school. If the elementary program is as good as it can be, enrollment in these higher level classes will not be a problem, not at least in the medium-sized and large districts.

In short, the recommendation, put in blunt terms, must be: <u>don't embark on an ambitious elementary program unless you are also committed to guarantee, within reasonable limits, continuity beyond elementary school and to upgrade the foreign language programs at the junior and senior high school levels.</u>

There are two ways to articulate, organically as it were, a new elementary school foreign language program: one is "building down" over several years, the other is "building up". "<u>Building up</u>", seems to be a good way to assure articulation when the new program involves an entirely new language. The language classes are simply begun in the grade decided upon, and a new class is added at the next

higher grade as students advance through school. "Building down", on the other hand, would seem to be a particularly good way to assure articulation when the new program involves languages already taught in high school or perhaps even in junior high/middle school. This will mostly be the case for Spanish, French or German. "Building down" consists in expanding an existing program gradually by adding the language each year to the curriculum of the next lower grade until that grade in elementary school is reached that was decided upon as the beginning of the program. For example, it will take five years of "building down" to introduce an elementary school program beginning in the third grade if the school already has an eighth-through-twelfth grade foreign language program. "Building down" at the same time implies strengthening and adding higher level courses at the upper end as students with higher levels of proficiency reach the upper grades. The traditional rule of thumb for determining progress in foreign languages has been: "one year of high school is the equivalent of two years of junior high". For planning purposes and until more reliable data are available, it seems reasonable to extend it to include middle school as well as to apply the same principle to cover elementary school: one year of junior high would thus be considered the equivalent of two years of elementary school. It should be clearly understood that, what is measured here, is the accumulation of knowledge concerning grammatical structures and vocabulary. The above

rule of thumb probably does not measure proficiency (that is the capacity to actually use the language) nor certainly the quality of learning (that is fluency, authenticity of speech, etc.). In any case, beyond the planning stage, once the program is in operation, placement tests rather than simply the number of years in class should determine in which foreign language class an elementary student fits in best in junior high/middle school and then further on in high school. For a transition period, until the entire program is in place, some special arrangements may be necessary to accommodate students somewhat "out of step". Proven techniques of small-group work and individualization, and modern technology (audio, video and computer) may help make such arrangements possible, effective and fundable. Both "building up" and "building down" require careful advanced planning and an implementation period of several years.

5.2 Appropriate Approaches and Materials

Regardless of which basic format is chosen, teaching methods and materials must be appropriate for the cognitive and affective level of the young learner. The main emphasis will be on the oral aspects of language, on listening comprehension and speaking with lesser weight given to reading and writing. Language-activating games of all kinds will play an important role. The concrete and visual will be emphasized over the abstract and conceptual. Relating

the language experience to the children's immediate "world context" will be crucial. For that age group TPR, the Total Physical Response approach (Asher) will be of greater significance and benefit than for any other age group of learners. Singing and story telling will become attractive, regular activities. For German, French and Spanish some good materials are available, produced either in the U.S. or abroad, among them authentic materials designed for use by children who live in the target culture: records or cassettes, story books, coloring books, picture dictionaries as well as perhaps some introductory school texts in specific subject matters such as geography, history, or art. Another source of materials is the virtually inexhaustible world of realia, collected abroad or at home, or made by the teacher and the children themselves. In fact, anything the teacher or children can show, demonstrate or act out in class can be made to work. Any object, person, action or idea can become a focal point of learning, practicing, and meaningful communication.

If appropriate materials are not available, or if the teacher considered for the position does not know the appropriate approaches or is unable to learn to apply them, a foreign language program in elementary school should probably not be started. Because of the importance of performance, in foreign languages (just as probably in art

or music) a really poor program may be worse than no program at all.

5.3 Teacher Qualification

The teacher is the third cornerstone of any good program. What qualifications are needed for the foreign language elementary teacher? It is obvious that, regardless of which basic format is chosen, the teacher must be able to relate well to the children. Training in child development and elementary general methodology will be a given, since teacher certification depends on it. Training in special foreign language methodology is highly desirable; teachers without it should be strongly encouraged to obtain it as part of their in-service professional development (summer courses, attending conferences, etc.) It would seem that the question of teacher qualifications is really controversial only with respect to the proficiency in the target language. Many will be tempted to conclude that elementary foreign language teachers, because they work with young children, need not possess a very advanced knowledge of the language and that therefore less than fully qualified individuals could be put in charge of these classes. This however would be a serious mistake. First of all, the teacher should possess an acceptable accent. At a younger age, children generally have little difficulty in reproducing different sounds, intonation patterns, and the like. They can, in those early years, acquire that otherwise

elusive native or near-native accent. To give them a poor model would obviously be counter-productive. And with the heavy emphasis on the spoken word in elementary language program it would be equally nonsensical to hire a teacher who cannot speak the language. The subject of the teacher's proficiency in the target language is currently very much under discussion, especially since many states have adopted or consider adopting proficiency testing for teachers. A consensus has not yet been reached but most teacher trainers seem to agree that, as a minimum, a secondary teacher should rate at "Advanced Plus" (or 2+ on the five-point government scale), and an elementary teacher at "Advanced" (or 2). (A copy of the "ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines: Generic Description" is attached). It should be clearly understood that proficiency cannot be defined simply in terms of a given number of academic credits, or courses, or semesters of study. It depends on many variables such as the quality of instruction, individual aptitude and application continued, use or length of time of non-use, study abroad, etc. Proficiency is a dynamic thing: it progresses or retrogresses. It can be assessed with any degree of accuracy only by a trained tester and foreign language specialist. The Alaska Foreign Language Association is willing to advise school districts on proficiency-testing and to help, within the limits of available expertise, with the assessment of prospective teacher candidates.

To relieve the current national shortage of qualified elementary foreign-language teachers, three basic options should be offered by our teacher training programs to prospective candidates for such positions:

(a) a B.A. degree in Foreign Language, in combination with elementary certification. A foreign language degree that stresses language and culture and that requires two languages rather than one is currently offered by the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. An achievement/proficiency exam as part of the degree requirements is under discussion. The program needs to be strengthened in the area of foreign language pedagogy and in the supervision of student teaching by foreign language specialists.

(b) a B.Ed. degree in Elementary Education, in combination with a strong concentration in one foreign language (a minimum of 15 credits above the 100 level) and an achievement/proficiency exam passed at least at the 80% mark.

(c) A secondary teaching certificate with an endorsement in one or two foreign languages, in combination with a selected number of elementary education courses (to be determined), and an achievement/proficiency exam as a condition for the elementary teaching endorsement.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following, the abbreviation FL in ES will be used to designate foreign languages in elementary school.

6.1 Recommendations to the State Department of Education

(1) PUT TOGETHER A BASIC "FL IN ES INFORMATION PACKAGE", INCLUDING THIS REPORT, AND GIVE IT THE WIDEST POSSIBLE DISSEMINATION AMONG ALASKA'S SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

TIME FRAME: BY DECEMBER 1985

(2) PREPARE A "MODEL CURRICULUM: FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL" FOR A PROGRAM WITH THE FOLLOWING PARAMETERS: "FLES FORMAT, 5 X 30 MINUTES PER WEEK INSTRUCTION, FULLY INCORPORATED", AND DISTRIBUTE IT AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE AMONG SCHOOL DISTRICTS, STATEWIDE ASSOCIATIONS AND COMMISSIONS.

TIME FRAME: BY MAY 1986

(3) REQUEST THAT FL IN ES PROGRAMS BE FORMALLY DISCUSSED BY THE VARIOUS STATEWIDE ASSOCIATIONS, IN PARTICULAR BY: ALASKA ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS; ALASKA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY PRINCIPALS; ALASKA SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION; ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT; ALASKA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS; AND, BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER LEVELS, BY THE COMMISSION ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND OF COURSE, THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

TIME FRAME: BY MAY 1986

(4) AFTER THE INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION PHASE, COORDINATE THROUGH THE SUPERINTENDENTS A STATEWIDE SURVEY IN ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF INTEREST FOR FL IN ES PROGRAMS IN ALASKA.

TIME FRAME: BY DECEMBER 1986

(5) STAND READY TO ASSIST SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FL IN ES PROGRAMS THROUGH INFORMATION DISSEMINATION, SPECIAL TRAINING SESSIONS, POSSIBLY ADVICE ON GRANT WRITING, SPECIAL FUNDING.

TIME FRAME: 1986, OR WHENEVER SCHOOLS DECIDE TO IMPLEMENT

6.2 Recommendations to School Administrators

(1) DISSEMINATE BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT FL IN ES SUPPLIED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND OTHER SOURCES AS MIGHT BE AVAILABLE.

(2) CONDUCT A SURVEY OF INTEREST, IN PARTICULAR AMONG THE PARENTS (A SAMPLE POLL IS ATTACHED IN THE APPENDIX).

(3) IF POLLS ARE FAVORABLE: (A) ASSESS THE OVERALL FINANCIAL IMPACT OF A FL IN ES; ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM ON SUBSEQUENT LEVELS; THE AVAILABILITY OF TEACHERS; AS NEEDED, ITS IMPACT ON EXISTING NATIVE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS; AND (P) DECIDE ON: BASIC FORMAT; LANGUAGE(S) TO BE OFFERED; STATUS AS REQUIRED OR ELECTIVE SUBJECT; ADD-ON OR INTEGRATED FORMAT; WHICH ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TO OFFER FOREIGN LANGUAGE(S); GRADES IN WHICH THE PROGRAM IS TO BE INTRODUCED; BUILDING "UP" OR "DOWN" APPROACH TO ARTICULATION; ETC.

(4) IF THE ASSESSMENT SHOWS THAT A FL IN ES PROGRAM IS DESIRABLE AND FEASIBLE: (A) INCLUDE ADEQUATE PROFICIENCY IN THE DESIRED FOREIGN LANGUAGE(S) AMONG THE CRITERIA FOR NEW HIRES WELL BEFORE THE PROGRAM IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN; IF NECESSARY, REQUEST AFLA'S HELP IN ASSESSING FINALISTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY; AND (B) DEVELOP OR ADOPT A CURRICULUM SUITABLE FOR THE TYPE OF PROGRAM CHOSEN.

(5) IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM WHEN QUALIFIED TEACHERS ARE HIRED ASSURING ARTICULATION WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS ON THE NEXT HIGHER LEVELS (MIDDLE SCHOOL/ JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL).

(6) INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY PARENTS, THROUGH INFORMATION (NEWSLETTER, NEWSPAPER ARTICLES, SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS, ETC.) AND ACTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS (TEACHING AIDE, CULTURE RESOURCE PERSON, PRESENTATIONS TO CLASSES, ETC.).

(7) DEVELOP OR ADOPT A SUITABLE TESTING PROGRAM AND MONITOR RESULTS CAREFULLY IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE(S) AND IN ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS, AND IF FEASIBLE IN GENERAL SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT, ATTITUDES, ETC.

(8) FORMALLY EVALUATE THE PROGRAM AFTER THREE AND FIVE YEARS.

(9) A SPECIAL RECOMMENDATION TO THE LARGER SCHOOL DISTRICT.

IF JAPANESE, KOREAN OR CHINESE IS CONSIDERED DESIRABLE: INTRODUCE TWO PROGRAMS - ONE WITH AN EAST-ASIAN, THE OTHER WITH A EUROPEAN LANGUAGE - BUILDING THE ASIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM "UP", YEAR AFTER YEAR, UNTIL IT SPANS THE WHOLE RANGE FROM ELEMENTARY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL, WHILE BUILDING THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE (WHICH IS ALREADY TAUGHT MOST LIKELY IN HIGH SCHOOL AND PERHAPS JUNIOR HIGH) "DOWN" UNTIL IT SPANS THE RANGE FROM ELEMENTARY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL.

THIS PROCEDURE ALLOWS PARENTS AND STUDENTS SOME CHOICE, AND PROVIDES THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION FOR PURPOSES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION WITH VALUABLE COMPARATIVE DATA CONCERNING ENROLLMENT ATTRITION, PROFICIENCY LEVELS ATTAINED, ETC.

6.3 Recommendations to the University of Alaska

(1) REINTRODUCE A COURSE SPECIFICALLY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE METHODOLOGY.

(2) FOR STUDENT TEACHING SET UP A SYSTEM UNDER WHICH STUDENT TEACHING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IS SUPERVISED BY A FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPECIALIST.

(3) GENERALLY KEEP SEVERAL OPTIONS IN TEACHER TRAINING AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS, ALONG THE LINES DISCUSSED UNDER 5.3 OF THIS REPORT.

7. Selected Bibliography

The following few titles are meant to provide a first orientation. They are but a small selection from a much vaster literature pertinent to the subject of this report. Some have been extracted from a computer-searched bibliography supplied by Dr. Clark after his presentation in Fairbanks. The complete bibliography can be obtained from the Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007. A useful bibliography can also be found in Rhodes-Schreibstein, 1983.

"ED" refers to documents in the ERIC Collection which can be read on micro-fiche in the university libraries in Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau.

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(2) Nancy C. Rhodes et al., Elementary School Foreign Language Instruction in the United States: Innovative Approaches for the 1980's. Final Report, Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1981 - ED 209 940

(3) Harvey J. Ginsburg - Ingeborg H. McCoy, "An Empirical Rationale for Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools", Modern Language Journal, 65 (Spring 1981), 36-42

(4) Robert J. DiPietro, "Filling the Elementary Curriculum with Languages: What Are the Effects?", Modern Language Annals, 13,2 (1980), 115-123

(5) William R. Lee, "For and Against an Early Start", Foreign Language Annals, 10,3 (May 1977), 263-270

(6) Nancy C. Rhodes - Marguerite Ann Snow, "Foreign Language in the Elementary School: A Comparison of Achievement", ERIC/CLL News Bulletin 7,2 (March 1984), 3-5

(7) Jacqueline Benevento, Issues and Innovations in Foreign Language Education, Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1985 ("Fastback #222")

(8) Harris Winitz, Ed., Native Language and Foreign Language Acquisition. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, vol. 379, New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1981 - ED 230 042

(9) Fred Genesee, "Bilingual Education of Majority-Language Children: The Immersion Experiments in Review", Applied Psycholinguistics, 4,1 (March 1983), 1-46

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(11) William E. DeLorenzo - Lois A. Gladstein, "Immersion Education a l'Americaine: A Descriptive Study of U.S. Immersion Programs", Modern Language Annals, 17,1 (1984), 35-40

(12) Lorraine A. Strasheim, "FLEX: The Acronym and the Entity", Unterrichtspraxis, 15,1 (Spring 1982), 60-63

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(14) Nancy A. Mavrogenes, "The Effect of Elementary Latin Instruction on Language Arts Performance", Elementary School Journal, 77,4 (March 1977), 268-273

(15) "Strength Through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability". Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, 1979, in particular Chapter II.

ACTFL
PROVISIONAL
PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

This project

A DESIGN FOR MEASURING AND COMMUNICATING
FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

was funded by a grant (#G008 103203)
from the International Research and Studies Program
of the U.S. Department of Education

Provisional Generic Descriptions—Speaking

Novice—Low	Unable to function in the spoken language. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words. Essentially no communicative ability.
Novice—Mid	Able to operate only in a very limited capacity within very predictable areas of need. Vocabulary limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae. Syntax is fragmented, inflections and word endings frequently omitted, confused or distorted and the majority of utterances consist of isolated words or short formulae. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and are marked by frequent long pauses and repetition of an interlocutor's words. Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible and is strongly influenced by first language. Can be understood only with difficulty, even by persons such as teachers who are used to speaking with non-native speakers or in interactions where the context strongly supports the utterance.
Novice—High	Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only where this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. There is no real autonomy of expression, although there may be some emerging signs of spontaneity and flexibility. There is a slight increase in utterance length but frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor's words still occur. Most utterances are telegraphic and word endings are often omitted, confused or distorted. Vocabulary is limited to areas of immediate survival needs. Can differentiate most phonemes when produced in isolation but when they are combined in words or groups of words, errors are frequent and, even with repetition, may severely inhibit communication even with persons used to dealing with such learners. Little development in stress and intonation is evident.
Intermediate—Low	Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements, and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations. When asked to do so, is able to formulate some questions with limited constructions and much inaccuracy. Almost every utterance contains fractured syntax and other grammatical errors. Vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs. Strong interference from native language occurs in articulation, stress and intonation. Misunderstandings frequently arise from limited vocabulary and grammar and erroneous phonology but, with repetition, can generally be understood by native speakers in regular contact with foreigners attempting to speak their language. Little precision in information conveyed owing to tentative state of grammatical development and little or no use of modifiers.
Intermediate—Mid	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands. Is able to formulate some questions when asked to do so. Vocabulary permits discussion of topics beyond basic survival needs such as personal history and leisure time activities. Some evidence of grammatical accuracy in basic constructions, for example, subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, some notion of inflection.
Intermediate—High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Shows some spontaneity in language production but fluency is very uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation but has little understanding of the social conventions of conversation. Developing flexibility in a range of circumstances beyond immediate survival needs. Limited vocabulary range necessitates much hesitation and circumlocution. The commoner tense forms occur but errors are frequent in formation and selection. Can use most question forms. While some word order is established, errors still occur in more complex patterns. Cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances or unfamiliar situations. Ability to describe and give precise information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features such as pronouns and verb inflections, but many are unreliable, especially if less immediate in reference. Extended discourse is largely a series of short, discrete utterances. Articulation is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners, and can combine most phonemes with reasonable comprehensibility, but still has difficulty in producing certain sounds, in certain positions, or in certain combinations, and speech will usually be labored. Still has to repeat utterances frequently to be understood by the general public. Able to produce some narration in either past or future.
Advanced	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information; can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties. Has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.

Advanced Plus	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses or unevenness in one of the foregoing or in pronunciation result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range from simple constructions such as plurals, articles, prepositions, and negatives to more complex structures such as tense usage, passive constructions, word order, and relative clauses. Normally controls general vocabulary with some groping for everyday vocabulary still evident. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under tension or pressure language may break down.
Superior	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Vocabulary is broad enough that speaker rarely has to grope for a word; accent may be obviously foreign; control of grammar good; errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

Provisional Generic Descriptions—Listening

Novice—Low	No practical understanding of the spoken language. Understanding limited to occasional isolated words, such as cognates, borrowed words, and high frequency social conventions. Essentially no ability to comprehend even short utterances.
Novice—Mid	Sufficient comprehension to understand some memorized words within predictable areas of need. Vocabulary for comprehension limited to simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae. Utterances understood rarely exceed more than two or three words at a time and ability to understand is characterized by long pauses for assimilation and by repeated requests on the listener's part for repetition, and/or a slower rate of speech. Confuses words that sound similar.
Novice—High	Sufficient comprehension to understand a number of memorized utterances in areas of immediate need. Comprehands slightly longer utterances in situations where the context aids understanding, such as at the table, in a restaurant/store, in a train/bus. Phrases recognized have for the most part been memorized. Comprehends vocabulary common to daily needs. Comprehends simple questions/statements about family members, age, address, weather, time, daily activities and interests. Misunderstandings arise from failure to perceive critical sounds or endings. Understands even standard speech with difficulty but gets some main ideas. Often requires repetition and/or a slowed rate of speed for comprehension, even when listening to persons such as teachers who are used to speaking with non-natives.
Intermediate—Low	Sufficient comprehension to understand utterances about basic survival needs, minimum courtesy and travel requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can understand non-memorized material, such as simple questions and answers, statements, and face-to-face conversations in the standard language. Comprehension areas include basic needs: meals, lodging, transportation, time, simple instructions (e.g., route directions) and routine commands (e.g., from customs officials, police). Understands main ideas. Misunderstandings frequently arise from lack of vocabulary or faulty processing of syntactic information often caused by strong interference from the native language or by the imperfect and partial acquisition of the target grammar.
Intermediate—Mid	Sufficient comprehension to understand simple conversations about some survival needs and some limited social conventions. Vocabulary permits understanding of topics beyond basic survival needs such as personal history and leisure time activities. Evidence of understanding basic constructions, for example, subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement; evidence that some inflection is understood.
Intermediate—High	Sufficient comprehension to understand short conversations about most survival needs and limited social conventions. Increasingly able to understand topics beyond immediate survival needs. Shows spontaneity in understanding, but speed and consistency of understanding uneven. Limited vocabulary range necessitates repetition for understanding. Understands commoner tense forms and some word order patterns, including most question forms, but miscommunication still occurs with more complex patterns. Can get the gist of conversations, but cannot sustain comprehension in longer utterances or in unfamiliar situations. Understanding of descriptions and detailed information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features such as pronouns and verb inflections, but many are unreliably understood, especially if other material intervenes. Understanding is largely limited to a series of short, discrete utterances. Still has to ask for utterances to be repeated. Some ability to understand the facts.

Advanced	Sufficient comprehension to understand conversations about routine social conventions and limited school or work requirements. Able to understand face-to-face speech in the standard language, delivered at a normal rate with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners. Understands everyday topics, common personal and family news, well-known current events, and routine matters involving school or work; descriptions and narration about current, past and future events; and essential points of discussion or speech at an elementary level on topics in special fields of interest.
Advanced Plus	Sufficient comprehension to understand most routine social conventions, conversations on school or work requirements, and discussions on concrete topics related to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable ability and ease of understanding, but comprehension may break down under tension or pressure, including unfavorable listening conditions. Candidate may display weakness or deficiency due to inadequate vocabulary base or less than secure knowledge of grammar and syntax. Normally understands general vocabulary with some hesitant understanding of everyday vocabulary still evident. Can sometimes detect emotional overtones. Some ability to understand between the lines, i.e., to make inferences.
Superior	Sufficient comprehension to understand the essentials of all speech in standard dialects, including technical discussions within a special field. Has sufficient understanding of face-to-face speech, delivered with normal clarity and speed in standard language, on general topics and areas of special interest; understands hypothesizing and supported opinions. Has broad enough vocabulary that rarely has to ask for paraphrasing or explanation. Can follow accurately the essentials of conversations between educated native speakers, reasonably clear telephone calls, radio broadcasts, standard news items, oral reports, some oral technical reports, and public addresses on non-technical subjects. May not understand native speakers if they speak very quickly or use some slang or unfamiliar dialect. Can often detect emotional overtones. Can understand "between the lines" (i.e., make inferences).

Provisional Generic Descriptions—Reading

Novice—Low	No functional ability in reading the foreign language.
Novice—Mid	Sufficient understanding of the written language to interpret highly contextualized words or cognates within predictable areas. Vocabulary for comprehension limited to simple elementary needs such as names, addresses, dates, street signs, building names, short informative signs (e.g., no smoking, entrance/exit) and formulaic vocabulary requesting same. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase and comprehension requires successive rereading and checking.
Novice—High	Sufficient comprehension of the written language to interpret set expressions in areas of immediate need. Can recognize all the letters in the printed version of an alphabetic system and high-frequency elements of a syllabary or a character system. Where vocabulary has been mastered can read for instruction and directional purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps and signs indicating hours of operation, social codes, and traffic regulations. This material is read only for essential information. Detail is overlooked or misunderstood.
Intermediate—Low	Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form the simplest connected material, either authentic or specially prepared, dealing with basic survival and social needs. Able to understand both mastered material and recombinations of the mastered elements that achieve meanings at the same level. Understands main ideas in material whose structures and syntax parallel the native language. Can read messages, greetings, statements of social amenities or other simple language containing only the highest frequency grammatical patterns and vocabulary items including cognates (if appropriate). Misunderstandings arise when syntax diverges from that of the native language or when grammatical cues are overlooked.
Intermediate—Mid	Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form simple discourse for informative or social purposes. In response to perceived needs can read for information material such as announcements of public events, popular advertising, notes containing biographical information or narration of events, and straightforward newspaper headlines and story titles. Can guess at unfamiliar vocabulary if highly contextualized. Relies primarily on adverbs as time indicators. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. May have to read material several times before understanding.
Intermediate—High	Sufficient comprehension to understand a simple paragraph for personal communication, information or recreational purposes. Can read with understanding social notes, letters and invitations; can locate and

derive main ideas of the introductory/summary paragraphs from high interest or familiar news or other informational sources; can read for pleasure specially prepared, or some uncomplicated authentic prose, such as fictional narratives or cultural information. Shows spontaneity in reading by ability to guess at meaning from context. Understands common time indicators and can interpret some cohesive factors such as objective pronouns and simple clause connectors. Begins to relate sentences in the discourse to advance meaning, but cannot sustain understanding of longer discourse on unfamiliar topics. Misinterpretation still occurs with more complex patterns.

Advanced	Sufficient comprehension to read simple authentic printed material or edited textual material within a familiar context. Can read uncomplicated but authentic prose on familiar subjects containing description and narration such as news items describing frequently occurring events simple biographic information, social notices, and standard business letters. Can read edited texts such as prose fiction and contemporary culture. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Can follow essential points of written discussion at level of main ideas and some supporting ones with topics in a field of interest or where background exists. Some misunderstandings. Able to read the facts but cannot draw inferences.
Advanced Plus	Sufficient comprehension to understand most factual information in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special interests. Able to read for information and description, to follow sequence of events, and to react to that information. Is able to separate main ideas from lesser ones, and uses that division to advance understanding. Can locate and interpret main ideas and details in material written for the general public. Will begin to guess sensibly at new words by using linguistic context and prior knowledge. May react personally to material but does not yet detect subjective attitudes, values, or judgments in the writing.
Superior	Able to read standard newspaper items addressed to the general reader, routine correspondence reports and technical material in a field of interest at a normal rate of speed (at least 220 wpm). Readers can gain new knowledge from material on unfamiliar topics in areas of a general nature. Can interpret hypotheses, supported opinions and conjectures. Can also read short stories, novels, and other recreational literature accessible to the general public. Reading ability is not subject-matter dependent. Has broad enough general vocabulary that successful guessing resolves problems with complex structures and low-frequency idioms. Misreading is rare. Almost always produces correct interpretation. Able to read between the lines. May be unable to appreciate nuance or stylistics.

Provisional Generic Descriptions—Writing

Novice—Low	No functional ability in writing the foreign language.
Novice—Mid	No practical communicative writing skills. Able to copy isolated words or short phrases. Able to transcribe previously studied words or phrases.
Novice—High	Able to write simple fixed expressions and limited memorized material. Can supply information when requested on forms such as hotel registrations and travel documents. Can write names, numbers, dates, one's own nationality, addresses, and other simple biographic information, as well as learned vocabulary, short phrases, and simple lists. Can write all the symbols in an alphabetic or syllabic system or 50 of the most common characters. Can write simple memorized material with frequent misspellings and inaccuracies.
Intermediate—Low	Has sufficient control of the writing system to meet limited practical needs. Can write short messages, such as simple questions or notes, postcards, phone messages, and the like within the scope of limited language experience. Can take simple notes on material dealing with very familiar topics although memory span is extremely limited. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences. Vocabulary is inadequate to express anything but elementary needs. Writing tends to be a loosely organized collection of sentence fragments on a very familiar topic. Makes continual errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but writing can be read and understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners. Able to produce appropriately some fundamental sociolinguistic distinctions in formal and familiar style, such as appropriate subject pronouns, titles of address and basic social formulae.
Intermediate—Mid	Sufficient control of writing system to meet some survival needs and some limited social demands. Able to compose short paragraphs or take simple notes on very familiar topics grounded in personal experience. Can discuss likes and dislikes, daily routine, everyday events, and the like. Can express past time, using

content words and time expressions, or with sporadically accurate verbs. Evidence of good control of basic constructions and inflections such as subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, and straightforward syntactic constructions in present or future time, though errors occasionally occur. May make frequent errors, however, when venturing beyond current level of linguistic competence. When resorting to a dictionary, often is unable to identify appropriate vocabulary, or uses dictionary entry in uninflected form.

Intermediate—High

Sufficient control of writing system to meet most survival needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics, and respond to personal questions using elementary vocabulary and common structures. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data and work experience, and short compositions on familiar topics. Can create sentences and short paragraphs relating to most survival needs (food, lodging, transportation, immediate surroundings and situations) and limited social demands. Can relate personal history, discuss topics such as daily life, preferences, and other familiar material. Can express fairly accurately present and future time. Can produce some past verb forms, but not always accurately or with correct usage. Shows good control of elementary vocabulary and some control of basic syntactic patterns but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts. Dictionary usage may still yield incorrect vocabulary of forms, although can use a dictionary to advantage to express simple ideas. Generally cannot use basic cohesive elements of discourse to advantage such as relative constructions, subject pronouns, connectors, etc. Writing, though faulty, is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners.

Advanced

Able to write routine social correspondence and simple discourse of at least several paragraphs on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, and write cohesive summaries, resumes, and short narratives and descriptions on factual topics. Able to write about everyday topics using both description and narration. Has sufficient writing vocabulary to express himself/herself simply with some circumlocution. Can write about a very limited number of current events or daily situations and express personal preferences and observations in some detail, using basic structures. Still makes common errors in spelling and punctuation, but shows some control of the most common formats and punctuation conventions. Good control of the morphology of the language (in inflected languages) and of the most frequently used syntactic structures. Elementary constructions are usually handled quite accurately, and writing is understandable to a native speaker not used to reading the writing of foreigners. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices such as pronouns and repeated words with good accuracy. Able to join sentences in limited discourse, but has difficulty and makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Paragraphs are reasonably unified and coherent.

Advanced Plus

Shows ability to write about most common topics with some precision and in some detail. Can write fairly detailed resumes and summaries and take quite accurate notes. Can write most social and informal business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences and explain simply points of view in prose discourse. Can write about concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Normally controls general vocabulary with some circumlocution. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of expression, but under time constraints and pressure language may be inaccurate and/or incomprehensible. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range from simple constructions such as plurals, articles, prepositions, and negatives to more complex structures such as tense usage, passive constructions, word order, and relative clauses. Some misuse of vocabulary still evident. Shows a limited ability to use circumlocution. Uses dictionary to advantage to supply unknown words. Writing is understandable to native speakers not used to reading material written by non-natives, though the style is still obviously foreign.

Superior

Able to use the written language effectively in most formal and informal exchanges on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos and social and business letters, short research papers and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields. Can express hypotheses, conjectures, and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. Can write about areas of special interest and handle topics in special fields, in addition to most common topics. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling, and a wide general vocabulary allow the writer to convey his/her message accurately, though style may be foreign. Can use complex and compound sentence structures to express ideas clearly and coherently. Uses dictionary with a high degree of accuracy to supply specialized vocabulary. Errors, though sometimes made when using more complex structures, are occasional, and rarely disturb the native speaker. Sporadic errors when using basic structures. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still cannot tailor writing precisely and accurately to a variety of audiences or styles.

Provisional Generic Descriptions—Culture

Novice	Limited interaction. Behaves with considerateness. Is resourceful in nonverbal communication, but is unreliable in interpretation of nonverbal cues. Is limited in language, as indicated under the listening and speaking skills. Lacks generally the knowledge of culture patterns requisite for survival situations.
Intermediate	Survival competence. Can deal with familiar survival situations and interact with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Uses behavior acquired for the purpose of greeting and leave-taking, expressing wants, asking directions, buying food, using transportation, tipping. Comprehends the response. Makes errors as the result of misunderstanding; miscommunicates, and misapplies assumptions about the culture.
Advanced	Limited social competence. Handles routine social situations successfully with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Shows comprehension of common rules of etiquette, taboos and sensitivities, though home culture predominates. Can make polite requests, accept and refuse invitations, offer and receive gifts, apologize, make introductions, telephone, purchase and bargain, do routine banking. Can discuss a few aspects of the home and the foreign country, such as general current events and policies, as well as a field of personal interest. Does not offend the culture bearer, but some important misunderstandings and miscommunications occur, in interaction with one unaccustomed to foreigners. Is not competent to take part in a formal meeting, or in a group situation where several persons are speaking informally at the same time.
Superior	Working social and professional competence. Can participate in almost all social situations and those within one vocation. Handles unfamiliar types of situations with ease and sensitivity, including some involving common taboos, or other emotionally charged subjects. Comprehends most nonverbal responses. Laughs at some culture-related humor. In productive skills, neither culture predominates; nevertheless, makes appropriate use of cultural references and expressions. Generally distinguishes between a formal and informal register. Discusses abstract ideas relating the foreign to the native culture. Is generally limited, however, in handling abstractions. Minor inaccuracies occur in perception of meaning and in the expression of the intended representation, but do not result in serious misunderstanding, even by a culture bearer unaccustomed to foreigners.
Near-Native Competence	Full social and professional competence. Fits behavior to audience, and the culture of the target language dominates almost entirely. Has internalized the concept that culture is relative and is always on the lookout to do the appropriate thing. Can counsel, persuade, negotiate, represent a point of view, interpret for dignitaries, describe and compare features of the two cultures. In such comparisons, can discuss geography, history, institutions, customs and behavior patterns, current events, and national policies. Perceives almost all unverbalized responses, and recognizes almost all allusions, including historical and literary commonplaces. Laughs at most culture-related humor. Controls a formal and informal register of behavior. Is inferior to the culture bearer only in background information related to the culture such as childhood experiences, detailed regional geography and past events of significance.
Native Competence	Examinee is indistinguishable from a person brought up and educated in the culture.

GUTEN TAG! BONJOUR! BUENOS DIAS! SALVE! CIAO!

Foreign Language Department

TO: The Parents of School District Elementary Students

FROM: Dr. Mary Francis, Assistant Superintendent and Elementary Foreign Language Curriculum Committee of the North Star Borough School District

DATE: April 1, 1985

The School District is considering implementing foreign language instruction at the elementary level. Therefore, we are interested in finding out from you, the parents of the elementary school children in the borough, your ideas and opinions on foreign language learning at this level. The program, as we envision it, will be part of the regular classroom instruction and will coordinate with the middle school foreign language program. Its purpose is to promote speaking and listening skills and cultural awareness in a foreign language early in a child's educational experience.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT. PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO FILL OUT THIS SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN IT TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER PROMPTLY.

ELEMENTARY FOREIGN LANGUAGE SURVEY

School_____Grade_____Teacher_____

Directions: Please check as many boxes as you feel appropriate. Additional comments are invited. Return the questionnaire by the end of the week.

1. How important do you believe foreign language instruction in elementary school to be?
   - (a) very important
   - (b) not important
   - (c) important
   - (d) other

2. What specific benefits for our children do you foresee coming out of the program? (Check as many as you like.)
   - (a) Better understanding of English
   - (b) Higher grades
   - (c) Ability to communicate in another language
   - (d) Broader world view
   - (e) Economic/career benefits
   - (f) College preparation
   - (g) Enjoyment
   - (h) Carry on heritage and family tradition
   - (i) Other

3. In your opinion when is the best time to start a foreign language?
   - (a) Kindergarten/1st grade
   - (b) 3rd grade
   - (c) 5th grade
   - (d) Other

"A person who does not know a foreign language, does not know his own language."

–Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

4. How long should the program be?

(a) 2 years
(b) 4 years
(c) 6 years
(d) Lifelong
(e) Other

5. How many 30 minute periods of foreign language instruction per week would you prefer?

Kindergarten/1st grade
(a) 2 times a week
(b) 3 times a week
(c) 5 times a week
(d) Other

4th/6th grade
(a) 2 times a week
(b) 3 times a week
(c) 5 times a week
(d) Other

6. What specific languages would you like to see the school district offer in elementary school?

(a) French
(b) German
(c) Japanese
(d) Korean
(e) Latin
(f) Russian
(g) Spanish
(h) Other

7. Do you foresee any disadvantages to this program? Please explain.